

Message Text

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15

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0115

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR , EGEN, UK, EEC

SUBJECT: EC MEMBERSHIP: REFERENDUM BILL ADVANCES AS LABOR

TEMPERS COOL

REF: LONDON 5456

SUMMARY - GOVERNMENT APRIL 10 ANNOUNCED THAT REFERENDUM
WILL BE HELD JUNE 5. THE PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY (PLP)

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PULLED TOGETHER AND, WITH LIBERAL SUPPORT, ENSURED SE-

COND READING OF REFERENDUM BILL BY COMFORTABLE MARGIN. MEANWHILE, TEMPERS WITHIN THE PLP SEEMED TO BE COOLING, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT, AND ANTI-MARKETEERS STAGED MAJOR RALLY IN LONDON. END SUMMARY.

1. GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN EDWARD SHORT APRIL 10 TOLD COMMONS THAT HMG NOW INTENDS TO HOLD REFERENDUM ON JUNE 5. SHORT ALSO AFFIRMED GOVERNMENT DECISION TO PERMIT FREE VOTE ON CONTENTIOUS ISSUE OF HOW REFERENDUM WILL BE TALLIED. ABANDONMENT OF ITS EARLIER INSISTANCE ON SINGLE NATION-WIDE TALLY REMOVED MOST SERIOUS POLITICAL OBSTACLE TO PASSAGE OF BILL, AND IT SAILED THROUGH THE SECOND READING VOTE BY MARGIN OF 64, WITH LIBERALS AND NATIONALIST PARTIES JOINING PLP IN SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENT. WE UNDERSTAND CONSERVATIVE PARTY TOO WILL FREE ITS MEMBERS FROM PARTY WHIP ON VOTE TALLY QUESTION. GOVERNMENT ALSO ANNOUNCED PLANS TO RECESS PARLIAMENT TEN DAYS BEFORE REFERENDUM, ALLOWING MPS TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN CAMPAIGN.

2. WITH SUFFICIENT SUPPORT FOR THE REFERENDUM BILL SEEMINGLY ASSURED, PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE IS NOW PROCEDURAL. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER GOVERNMENT CAN SHEPHERD BILL THROUGH COMMITTEE STAGES IN TIME TO MEET JUNE 5 TIMEFRAME. THE MAJOR PROBLEM WILL BE FLOOD OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS WHICH ADDRESS VIRTUALLY ALL ASPECTS OF THE BILL, FROM WORDING OF REFERENDUM QUESTION TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR UMBRELLA CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATIONS. TORIES, SHOULD THEY DESIRE, COULD DELAY PASSAGE IN HOUSE OF LORDS, BUT THIS APPEARS UNLIKELY.

3. PASSIONS OF PLP ANTI-EC BLOC, WHICH WERE RUNNING HIGH FOLLOWING COMMONS VOTE ON EC RECOMMENDATION AND DISMISSAL OF INDUSTRY MINISTER ERIC HEFFER (REFTEL), SEEMED TO COOL. HEFFER IS CREDITED WITH HEADING OFF TRIBUNE EFFORT TO TABLE MOTION CONDEMNING PRIME MINISTER WILSON AND TO BOYCOTT STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING ON INDUSTRY BILL. EMPLOYMENT SECRETARY FOOT CONTINUES HIS EFFORTS TO DAMPEN DIVISIONS IN THE LABOR PARTY. SPEAKING AT MASSIVE ANTI-EC RALLY IN LONDON, HE CALLED FOR MODERATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TION AND STRESSED THAT LABOR ANTI-MARKETEERS MUST NOT FORGET THEY HAD TO SUSTAIN THE LABOR GOVERNMENT WHILE WORKING FOR REJECTION OF CONTINUED EC MEMBERSHIP. AS A RESULT OF THESE ACTIONS, THE TIDE OF FEELING AGAINST WILSON IN THE ANTI-MARKET CAMP APPEARS TO HAVE RECEDED, THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET, WHICH WILL BE UNVEILED NEXT WEEK, COULD CAUSE THEM TO RISE AGAIN.

RICHARDSON

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